

Fordham Law School

FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History

Black Law Student Association

Student Life

11-11-1988

Letter to Dean Feerick

Marcia Thurmond

Black Law Students Association, Fordham University School of Law

Follow this and additional works at: <https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/blsa>

Recommended Citation

Thurmond, Marcia and Black Law Students Association, Fordham University School of Law, "Letter to Dean Feerick" (1988). *Black Law Student Association*. 25.

<https://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/blsa/25>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Life at FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. It has been accepted for inclusion in Black Law Student Association by an authorized administrator of FLASH: The Fordham Law Archive of Scholarship and History. For more information, please contact tmelnick@law.fordham.edu.

BLACK LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION (BLSA)

November 11, 1988

John D. Feerick, Dean
Fordham University School of Law
140 West 62nd Street
New York, NY 10023-7477

Dear Dean Feerick:

We are writing this letter to express our extreme outrage at two recent examples of overt racism at Fordham.

First, enclosed are two letters which appeared in the October 1988, Vol. 21, No. 1, issue of The Advocate in a column called "Letters to Mr. X." These letters are offensive to anyone who is fair minded and sensible. The membership of the Black Law Students Association took particular exception to these letters because these letters perpetuate negative stereotypes and heighten an already tense racial situation at Fordham Law School. To suggest that the racial situation at Fordham Law School is not tense is to suggest that the racial situation in this country is not tense. Howard Beach, the Yonkers housing desegregation plan and the rise in popularity of several white supremacist groups all belie the contention that all is well between the races in this country. Fordham Law School does not exist in a vacuum and therefore suffers from the same ills as society as a whole.

Unfortunately, the student(s) responsible for publishing these letters in The Advocate cannot be held to a higher standard than the professors at Fordham Law School.

That brings us to the second example of overt racism at Fordham Law School. Actually, chronologically, this incident occurred first. Last spring, on Professor Magnetti's torts final, Professor Magnetti had a tortfeasor named Ernie "Happy" Johnson who said "...Boss man and me is hungry." There is, of course, no mention of the tortfeasor's race; and were we to assume that he is Black simply because his verb and noun tense do not agree, we would be guilty of the very thing that outrages us. However, we are all well aware of the twisted perceptions that many whites have of Blacks, as evidenced by the number of white students who indicated they believed "Happy" Johnson was black. If Professor Magnetti was referring to a Black person, it was inaccurate, insulting and overtly racist. If in fact he was not referring to a Black person, it was nonetheless insensitive, and inflammatory, given those pervasive perceptions.

Dean John D. Feerick
November 11, 1988
Page 2

In addition, the reference to Lake Twana in the Fingerlake Region of New York on the exam was unambiguously inflammatory at the very least, given the tremendous controversy surrounding the Tawana Brawley case in upstate New York during the time the exam was given.

Dean Feerick, law school is no place for ignorance and hatred. To do less than to sanction The Advocate and Professor Magnetti is to condone, indeed, to encourage just these types of sentiments and emotions. We are well aware of the possible First Amendment implications which may arise, but we trust that the commitment to ensuring equality for minority students at Fordham Law School, which you have articulated on many occasions, is genuine and will prevail. In light of that, we trust that if there is not a hard-line policy against such racism, that you will immediately implement one.

Race relations in this nation are horrendous. Whether or not we want to admit it, race relations at Fordham are no better. By yourself, you can have little effect on the nation. However, by taking a strong stand against racism here, you can diffuse a potentially explosive situation at Fordham Law School.

We anticipate your immediate response.

Sincerely,

The Fordham Black Law
Students Association



Marcia Thurmond-Chairperson